

## **Questions Received at February 4, 5, 11 & 12 “Understanding Your Future” Employee Meetings and From Other Sources**

Q1: Under round one of the RIF, will employee experience (inside and outside of Government) be a factor or is retention standing (tenure, veteran preference, SCD, performance ratings) the only factor?

**Answer:** Round One of RIF is the first round of competition under RIF and it occurs between employees assigned to the same Competitive Level. Competition occurs to determine who will be released from the Competitive Level. Competition is driven by the Retention Standing (tenure, veteran’s preference, length of service, and performance) of each of the employees. An employee can be impacted by RIF even if they are not being released from their Competitive Level. For example, an employee can be impacted by RIF simply by being assigned to a different job description and/or different organization location within their same competitive level.

Q2 (part one): Under round one of the RIF, will competitive levels be based on MEO positions (series, grades, etc) or employees’ current positions and retention (series, grades, etc)?

**Answer:** A Competitive Level is a list of positions at the same grade and occupational series, the duties of which are similar enough to be interchangeable. Assignment of Competitive Level takes into account the position’s occupational series, grade level, pay plan, and work schedule. In Round One of the RIF, competition will occur within the employees’ currently assigned Competitive Levels. It is possible, however, that new vacant positions in the MEO will be assigned to already-existing competitive levels (if the occupational series, grade level, pay plan, work schedule, etc. are the same for the new MEO vacancy as for positions where a competitive level already exists) to which employees may currently be assigned, in which case Round One competition could result in employees being placed in MEO vacancies.

Q2 (part two): If based on MEO positions, will a separate competitive level be established for WG- 4749 series?

**Answer:** See above.

Q3: If employees survive and/or are retained under round one of the RIF, can these employees be affected under subsequent rounds of the RIF through either bump or retreat actions?

**Answer:** Yes. Employees can be released from their Competitive Level (Round One) through another employee’s Bump or Retreat action (Round Two).

Q4 (part one): For WG employees, the experience gained outside and/or inside the Government (such as cross-training or on-the-job training) may be less than three months. If this experience is certified/documentated by supervision, is it generally acceptable to qualify an

employee for all grade levels or only for specific lower grade levels (e.g. worker or helper), such as:

WG-11?  
WG-10?  
WG-09?  
WG-08?  
WG-07?  
WG-06?  
WG-05?

**Answer:** There are a number of variables, which impact the outcome, or effectiveness of cross-training. These variables include, but are not limited to, the quality of the on-the-job training received, and the ability of the trainee to grasp the concepts being taught. Given the number of variables, if an employee has undergone on-the-job training, or other similar hands-on training, the employee should document his/her OPF (OF-612) accordingly. If the employee has received required certifications or licenses, a copy of the front and back of each must be attached to the OF-612 and sent to the CPAC for inclusion in the employee's Official Personnel File (OPF). Qualifications for WG positions depend mostly on the employee's Ability to Perform the Work of the Position in question. If the employee can adequately provide evidence as to ability to perform the work of a particular WG position, then the employee will be better suited to be considered for that particular WG position.

For positions requiring performance of journeyman-level skills, employees must demonstrate the ability to do the work of the function/skill in question. This would include elements such as: showing a knowledge of equipment assembly, installation, repair, etc.; technical practices; use of measuring instruments; ability to interpret instructions, specifications, (including blueprint reading), etc; ability to use and maintain tools and equipment; knowledge of materials; and an ability to do the common tasks of the position under close supervision, or by intermittent, occasional performance on an independent basis, or by other comparable indicators of ability. Employees who possess no documented experience in a specific area are generally unable to meet these qualifications, unless the employee possesses substantial experience in a directly-related field. For example, an employee who possesses documented skills only in the field of heavy mobile equipment repair would generally be unable to meet the skills/knowledges required for a journeymen-level carpenter.

Positions requiring performance of duties at the trainee level need no documentation of specific skills and knowledges other than willingness to perform such duties (generally documented by having previously performed skilled labor work of any sort).

For placement in occupied positions, employees must demonstrate basic eligibility requirements and must additionally meet the "undue interruption" criteria.

Q4 (part two): Employees may have job experience and skills obtained inside and outside of the government that is not documented via formal details or SF-50 actions (but is included in their OPF as a resume or OF-612). Will the CPOC RIF team consult with USAG management on whether this experience is sufficient enough to qualify an employee for bumping purposes or for filling a MEO vacant position that results as an outcome of the RIF?

**Answer:** NECPOC RIF Team is able to base RIF qualifications decisions only upon documentation contained in the OPF as of the cutoff date for receipt of qualifications updates. Subject-matter experts (SME's) are useful in advising on whether certain types of properly-documented experience are related to duties required by specific positions to be filled. However, SME's are never advised of the identity of the specific employee involved, thus reducing the likelihood that SME responses may be based on personal biases regarding the employee or other factors harmful to accurate RIF qualifications decisions. Additionally, if the SME is able to identify the employee despite efforts to the contrary, the RIF team is able to consider no experience which the SME may claim the employee possesses if such experience is not properly documented in the OPF as of the cutoff date.

Q4 (part three): Employees may have job experience and skills obtained inside and outside of the government that is not documented via formal details or SF-50 actions (but is included in their OPF as a resume or OF-612). If this experience is determined to be sufficient (by CPOC RIF Team and/or USAG Management), can an employee who documents this experience in their OPF bump an employee in a lower tenure group within or outside the employee's competitive level? For example, can a 1AD with recent documented on-the-job training / cross-training bump a 1A, 1B, IIA, etc. employee:

Under experience described above, can a 1AD employee bump a 1A, 1B, IIA employee who has SF-50 documented experience?

**Answer:** IF the employee (in either scenario above) is determined to be qualified for a position, the employee may be assigned to that position through RIF mechanics, which can include Bumping or Retreating.

Bumping occurs when an employee displaced from his competitive level, displaces another employee (in another competitive level, in the same Competitive Area) who is in a lower Tenure group, or in a lower tenure subgroup within the same tenure group.

Tenure Group 1AD employees may bump employees with the following tenure: IA, IB, IIAD, IIA, IIB, IIIAD, IIIA, IIIB.

Retreating occurs when an employee displaced from his competitive level, displaces another employee (in another competitive level, in the same Competitive Area) who is a lower retention standing employee in the same Tenure and Subgroup, and the position being retreated to is one which the employee has formerly held, or essentially identical to one formerly held by the employee.

Qualifications are determined only by the RIF team, not by USAG. Even though SME's within USAG may be consulted, actual qualifications decisions are made only by the RIF team.

The positions that make up the new organization structure of the MEO, are by and large VACANT positions. Meaning, the majority of MEO positions are new and they are not currently encumbered. For this reason, the majority of MEO positions will not be filled through Bumping and Retreating. This is because bumping and retreating is an employee's right of assignment to a position occupied by another employee.

Bumping and Retreating may occur however within the Competitive Area of the USAG, outside of the purview of the new MEO Vacant positions. For example, a Tenure IB clerical employee at the DIS may be released from his competitive level and Bump a Tenure IIIB employee at the CPAC.

Under experience described above, can a 1AD employee bump a 1A, 1B, IIA employee who has similar experience not documented via formal details or SF-50 actions (but has similar experience included in their OPF as a resume or OF-612)?

**Answer:** Yes. See answer above.

Q4 (part four): Employees may have job experience and skills obtained inside and outside of the government that is not documented via formal details or SF-50 actions (but is included in their OPF as a resume or OF-612). If this experience is determined to be sufficient (by CPOC RIF Team and/or USAG Management), can an employee who documents this experience in their OPF, use this experience to qualify for WG-4749 MEO vacant positions where the employee lacks that skill through SF-50 actions or previous Government jobs?

**Answer:** Yes, depending on the variables and limitations described in the Answer to Question 4 (part one). It would appear that many of the questions above have to do with whether, when RIF qualifications decisions are made, experience properly documented in a qualifications update (such as the OF-612) has the same weight as experience documented in a job description to which an employee may have been officially assigned in the Federal service. The answer to this question is yes, provided 1) the update to the employee's OPF is received by the NECPOC by the cutoff date as reflected in the CA Milestone Schedule, and 2) the update to the OPF provides sufficient information about duties performed, dates held, and related information upon which to base a qualifications decision.

Q5 (part one): If an employee does not otherwise qualify for VERA (e.g. age or length of service), can special VERA authority be granted to the employee due to changed work requirements as a result of the MEO, such as the need to obtain a Commercial Driver's License (CDL), the requirement to take special immunization, etc)?

**Answer:** No. Employees need to meet the eligibility for VERA in order to be granted VERA, or any special VERA. Eligibility requirements include age and length of service.

Q5 (part two): If an employee qualifies for VERA but is in a position not being downgraded by the MEO, can the employee be given consideration for VERA due to changed work requirements (i.e. new position description requiring a CDL or special immunizations)?

**Answer:** All employees interested and eligible for VERA will be given consideration for VERA.

Q6: On final VERA/VSIP registration in May 2003, employee applications/requests may be lost in transmission through Administrative offices, couriers and CPAC. How will employees know that their application/request was received by CPAC?

**Answer:** Employees will deliver their applications for VERA/VSIP directly to the CPAC during 8am—4:30pm business hours. CPAC will “sign for receipt” of the employee’s VERA/VSIP application. The signed receipt will serve as the employee’s “proof” that CPAC received the employee’s application.

Q7: For cross-training and on-the-job training, will supervisors sign a memorandum that the training was successfully completed?

**Answer:** Yes. Supervisors will complete a memo indicating the cross-training received, the length of the cross-training, verifying that it was successfully completed. To be useful for qualifications determinations, this memo should also describe the specific duties in which the employee was trained.

Q8 (part one): For any required cross-training and on-the-job training, will supervisors and work leaders provide the training or will employees provide the training?

**Answer:** Supervisors, work leaders and employees will provide the training.

Q8 (part two): If employees refuse to provide cross-training to other employees, can management force them to provide the training?

**Answer:** Management has the right to assign work to employees, including the provision of training to other employees.

Q9: For cross-training and on-the-job training needed to qualify employees for MEO positions, will supervisors determine what training is needed for each employee; and then advise/counsel and schedule the employee for the training? For example a carpenter may need training as a painter and locksmith.

**Answer:** Supervisors will determine what training is needed for each employee; and then advise/counsel the employee on the merits for taking the training. The training will be offered on a voluntary basis; the training will not be mandated on employees.

Q10 Has the IAM Union endorsed on-the-job training and cross-training?

**Answer:** Yes.

Q11: The MEO will generate new requirements on employees, such as certifications and licenses where class room training is needed to qualify employees for MEO positions,. As the Government has changed the job requirement, will the tuition assistance program now pay 100% of the cost for any required training (e.g. Class A Commercial Drivers License needed to drive tractor trailers)?

**Answer:** This question is still under research; however, there has been a policy in place for the past two years allowing 75% tuition reimbursement and employees should take advantage of that policy.

Q12. For MEO and other required job training, will the Government (Army) reimburse employees who have to pay fees for licenses, written exams, medical examination costs, etc?

**Answer:** The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has recently approved a change that allows reimbursement of fees for licenses, written exams, medical examination costs, etc. We are waiting on implementation guidance from DoD / DA.

Q13: As more and more employees leave the USAG through either attrition or VERA/VSIP actions, can management competitively temporarily promote or detail employees to vacant positions to gain experience needed to qualify employees for MEO positions or private sector positions in case those employees are later separated? For example, can a roving patrol "Utility Systems Repairer Operator (USRO)" be temporarily promoted or detailed to an Electric Power Controller as these two positions have been combined in the MEO (the USROs may have already received some cross-training).

**Answer:** Management has the right to assign work. Management may detail or temporarily promote employees into positions where management feels employees are needed to carry on the mission.

Q14 (part one): As more and more employees leave the USAG through either attrition or VERA/VSIP actions, can management start recruiting for vacant positions (permanent) immediately after RIF notices are issued in September 2003 to ensure mission continuity and accomplishment after January 2004?

**Answer:** Effective 16 Jun 03, there will be a USAG-wide hiring freeze in effect, until the day following the RIF effective date (in JAN 04). Only Exceptions to the hiring freeze (as authorized by the NECPOC RIF Team where the proposed action, if effected, would have no adverse impact upon the RIF rights of persons assigned to the affected competitive area; and the proposed action would serve to reduce disruption within the workforce caused by the RIF) will be processed during this timeframe.

Q14 (part two) If MEO vacant positions are advertised after RIF notices are issued in September (e.g. advertised in October 2003), can term employees apply for these positions even if they are scheduled to be separated on January 24, 2004? Can downgraded employees apply even if they are registered in PPP?

**Answer:** Yes. There are no restrictions on any individuals interested in applying for a particular position. Employees registered in PPP, depending upon their PPP registration, may "pop" on PPP for the particular vacant position in question. An employee registered in PPP, or a Term employee, or any other individual, is welcome to

apply for any position. Term employees who do not possess personal competitive status would need to apply to positions that are opened to All Sources (the general public).

Q15: Can a term employee be offered a Discontinued Service Retirement (DSR) during the RIF?

**Answer:** Generally speaking, YES. However the Term employee must be covered under a retirement plan, and they must meet the eligibility for DSR to include (but not limited to) age and service requirements; minimum civilian service requirements; no declination of a reasonable offer, etc. The eligibility criteria for DSR are contained in the CSRS and FERS Handbook, Chapter #44. Employees should contact their Army Benefits Center (ABC Center) Counselor for further, specific information regarding DSR and DSR eligibility.

Q16: How will Mock RIF results be announced; between CPAC and each affected employee?; between CPAC and supervisor? Who then notifies affected employees or will some other means be used to announce Mock RIF results?

**Answer:** The NECPOC will notify the CPAC of the results of the Mock RIF. The impacted individuals will not receive a letter regarding the results of the Mock RIF. The CPAC will share the results of the Mock RIF with COL Ball. Employees who are projected to be downgraded or separated by the results contained in the Mock RIF will be contacted and notified of their eligibility for early Priority Placement Program (PPP) registration.

Q17: How will MEO partial Full Time Equivalent (FTEs) be treated during the Mock RIF and final RIF?

**Answer:** For the Mock RIF, partial FTEs will be eliminated. This may increase the number of employees eligible for early PPP registration. For the final RIF, Management is working on an approach to convert these positions to full-time FTEs; however, some may end-up being treated as part-time positions in the final RIF.

Q18: If I am attending class room training for a particular skill, such as obtaining a Class A Commercial Drivers License (CDL), will CPOC accept this as qualified training if it is "in-progress" or not completed at the time of the final RIF?

**Answer:** A CDL is the only license that CPOC requires completion prior to starting the final RIF. Therefore, in order for CPOC to recognize and give credit for a CDL, a photo copy of the completed CDL **MUST** be part of (inserted into) the employees Official Personnel Folder prior to start of the final RIF mechanics (scheduled to start on 3 July 03).